

## Excerpts from my field diary (July 2009 onwards)

**Pankaj Oudhia**

### **One day in Chendwa Dongar-Rasela-Patora forest regions of Indian states Chhattisgarh and Orissa for Ethnobotanical Survey. Part-I**

**Pankaj Oudhia**

#### **Abstract**

During Ethnobotanical survey in Chendwa Dongar-Rasela-Patora forest regions of Indian states Chhattisgarh and Orissa I gathered new information about flora and fauna. This series is an effort to present it in form of articles.

#### **Traditional Healing**

I was searching insects in [Tendu](#) plant. Suddenly sharp sting on my finger shocked me. It was very sharp. Within minutes rashes like Urticaria appeared on affected finger and I felt shivering on body. My driver said that it is sting by scorpion and started searching it on leaves. Fortunately Traditional Healers were with us. They assisted the driver and finally they found small caterpillar feeding on leaf. It was full of spines. One of the Healers shouted don't rub the affected finger and tolerate severe itching. If you rub it, the problem will increase. It was hard but I followed his instruction. After half an hour without any treatment problem started disappearing. They informed that this caterpillar is very toxic and plants on which they feed play important role in increasing its toxins. I took pictures of it from different angles. After coming back when I searched the literatures I found it as *Calcarifera ordinata*. Problem created by it is well known around the world. I was fortunate to get less contact with spiny setae. I am still amazed about the concentration of toxins as this tiny creature affected heavy weight person like me. The Healers informed that its spines are like allergy causing hair of [Kevatch](#). If you rub the affected part spines start going inside and problem increase. In moderate cases they apply sputum or urinate on affected part. The modern literatures suggested application of adhesive tape in affected part to remove spines. Use of Anti-allergy drugs is effective but in severe cases there is need to hospitalize the patients immediately. This insect entity is not present in Ecoport. I searched the picture database and found same insect in [Mango](#) tree growing in my home. The picture was taken by me. At that time I posted it to Pestnet for identification but failed to get the responses. I remembered the saying of Healers that same insect feeding on different plants show different level of toxicity. May be same caterpillar feeding on Mango contain less toxins.

After one hour of this injury suddenly my left side of head started swelling. Very soon it

became like small football. I thought it as continued bad effects of spines. Swelling was completely painless but it was looking very odd and driver was in much worry as we were in dense forest far from modern medical facilities. I showed it to the Healers. They said that it is not due to caterpillar. It is due to forest fly locally known as Andhiari Machhi. There is no need for worry. Just ignore it. It will take few hours and swelling will be reduced automatically. I continued taking pictures and roaming in forest. It took five hours and after long wait my face came in normal shape. It was terrible experience. I searched the reference literatures but failed to get any information on this aspect. After returning back I met to modern health experts and showed the pictures of swelling as well as insects. They were not aware of it. None of them were ever treated such cases. They thanked me for giving details as well as informing about traditional as well as modern treatments.

On same day we met another allergy causing insect. Back side of [Dhawai](#) leaves was covered with dozens of white caterpillars having long hairs. The Healers showed it. I took pictures from safe distance. They informed that long hairs are very dangerous. Many times herb collectors face the allergy caused by it during collection of Dhawai plant parts. Later I identified as *Spilosoma* sp.. In general they apply freshly collected [cow](#) dung solution on affected part in order to remove hairs and provide relief to victims.

These three incidences were full of danger but I accepted it as Birthday gifts. It gave me opportunity to learn about them and through my writings make aware others about its harms and traditional as well as modern treatments. After returning back from survey an idea came in my mind to prepare [Field Guide on venomous creatures](#) with all available details. Problems by insects happened on my 37th Birthday i.e. on 23 rd July. Today is 25th July. My mother is still in worry. She is continuously saying that swelling is still present on my face and I must take medicines for it. I have faith on Healers that there is no need to worry and also for medication. Hence, I will prefer to wait two more days.

## **One day in Chendwa Dongar-Rasela-Patora forest regions of Indian states Chhattisgarh and Orissa for Ethnobotanical Survey. Part-II**

**Pankaj Oudhia**

### **Abstract**

During Ethnobotanical survey in Chendwa Dongar-Rasela-Patora forest regions of Indian states Chhattisgarh and Orissa I gathered new information about flora and fauna. This series is an effort to present it in form of articles.

### **Traditional Healing**

The Traditional Healers traveling with us were in search on [Sal](#) trees. Near Rasela they found rich population. They jumped out from vehicle and started searching some thing in leaf litter under Sal trees. They were searching special mushroom known as Sal Phutu. They explained that after enough rains when leaves dry, Sal Phutu emerges out. It is cooked and used as vegetable. It is much liked by natives. The Healers informed that one season use of this mushroom as vegetable protects from different diseases round the year. Patients with poor vitality and pregnant women are suggested to consume it under supervision of experts. It is also added in herbal formulations used in treatment of modern diseases like cancer, at advanced stages. After long search they failed to find single mushroom. These year rains are less and natives are expecting bad drought year. [Rice](#) farmers are waiting for rains in order to save crop. Authorities are using Dam water to provide relief to them but Dams are also empty due to low rains. Herb collectors and traders are also waiting for rains. At this time forest floor is covered with new growth of [Bhui Neem](#) but during this visit it was hard to locate its population. The Healers have listed delayed germination in over 30 species of important herbs.

After getting tired the Healers came back near vehicle. They contacted local relatives to inform when this Mushroom will emerge. Ecoport picture database is already having picture of Sal Phutu. I have taken it last year in [Gariaband](#) region when Shri Bhojan informed about its medicinal uses. In forest even in Hindu month Sawan we failed to locate different types of mushroom.

Which tree is more susceptible to lightening-I asked routine question to the Healers. They repeated the common answer that [Mahua](#) is most susceptible and that is why they avoid to remain in contact of this tree during bad weather. I informed them about the bad incidence when villagers of Khudmudi village were returning back from fields by keeping [Kandi](#) bundles on head, lightening happened and one of them was died in the spot. Another one named Shri Nageswar injured partially and his affected leg still gives sharp burning sensation. The Healers suggested application of [Parsa](#) root paste externally along with ten other herbs on affected portion in order to remove this burning sensation. They claimed that regular application of it for few days can solve this problem within a week. Is it effective against all types of burn?-I asked. No, only for injuries due to lightening-They replied. I told them that in many places Traditional Healers suggest natives having fear of lightening (A typical symptom of Homoeopathic drug Phosphorus) to wear special Mala prepared from [Tulsi](#) stem pieces. The Healers of this region confirmed its efficacy.

While survey we passed through many hills. Surprisingly Healers were aware of herbs present in each and every hill. They were aware of names of these hills and claimed that they have climbed on it. They pointed a hill where Goddess named Tengnai lives. There is temple on hill. This hill is having rich population of herbs useful in skin diseases. They have collected [Patal Kumhda](#) from it many years back. I counted all hills and time required to understand it completely with the help of Healers. You will be surprised to know that our calculation resulted in 10 years of stay in hills. These hills are situated in small part of

[Chhattisgarh](#). You can imagine how much time is required to climb each and every hill of Chhattisgarh in this short life. There are hundreds of hills where no one has climbed so far due to some fear. Flora and fauna of such hills are far from human interference and for biodiversity researchers such places are heaven. The Healers informed about unique cave having only one opening. You have to put [coconut](#) fruit in entrance before entering. If you will forget to do it you will never come back. It is local belief. When Healers informed about insects and snakes very specific to this cave an interest generated in mind and I am planning to visit the place. I am dreaming of research team having experts of different fields. All experts must camp in such hills and observe the Nature's experiments. As mining activities are increasing in the state I am in worry that we will loose our forest wealth, even without knowing it completely.

### **How to Cite this Research Document**

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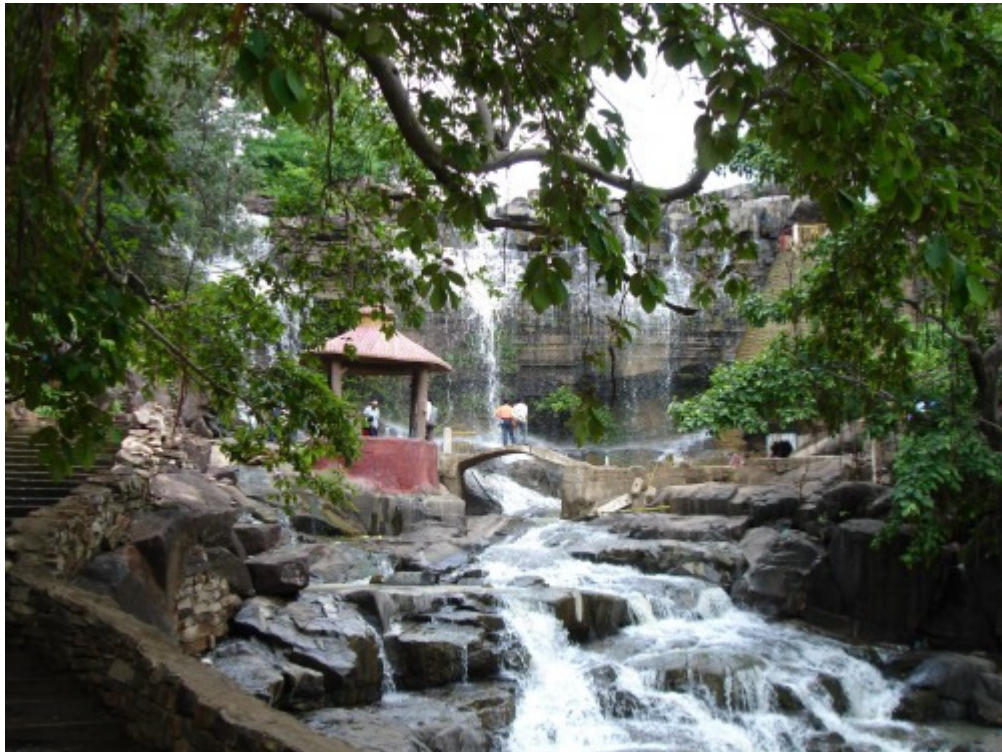


































































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